Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Read the case carefully

San Francisco sought water from the Hetch Hetchy area in Yosemite National Park. An earlier permit existed before Congress considered the 1913 bill. People and organizations disagreed about water needs, irrigation, scenery and public use. The National Archives overview supplies this historical context; the documents below let you study particular requests and decisions.

Institutions in these documents

- Congress is the federal legislature, made up of the Senate and House of Representatives. A senator receives a letter as a member of the Senate. One senator receiving a request does not alone enact a law.
- The President and Secretary of the Interior are executive officials. Some writers ask them to act on the earlier permit. Identify what the writer asks; do not assume that every requested action was legally available or carried out.
- The enacted Act assigns specific map approval to the Secretary of the Interior. Use that stated role rather than guessing general powers from a job title.

Four distinctions

- A petition or public resolution records what its writers request or endorse.
- A proposed bill contains language offered for legislation. Formal wording such as “Be it enacted” can appear in a proposal.
- An enacted Act is a law. In this packet, the official Act is dated December 19, 1913.
- Authorization permits specified actions under stated conditions. It does not prove that construction happened immediately or that promised benefits occurred.

How to read these pages

The source cards are Mentor Teaching paraphrases, not full transcriptions. Quotation marks identify brief exact excerpts. Use the original scans to see wording, dates and signatures. The sources folder holds full images and the government PDF; external links in Source credits are optional. Attribute a prediction or claimed benefit to its writer. The selected voices cannot establish what everyone believed.

Vocabulary: revoke = withdraw permission; rights of way = rights to use a route through land for specified purposes; grantee = the recipient of a grant; irrigation = supplying water to land; resolution = an adopted statement whose effect depends on who adopts it.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for lessons and guided practice

Hypatia Women’s Club

Original: two-page letter, San Francisco, February 5, 1910, addressed to Hon. Frank P. Flint, U.S. Senator. Signed by Edith Webster, secretary of the club. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Senate, item 7268040.

Paraphrase of page 1: The club voted to ask that the government’s existing permission for San Francisco to take water from Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy not be revoked. It claims the city has no other available sufficient pure-water supply. Page 2 supplies more arguments and the signature.

Exact excerpt, page 1: “be not revoked”. This asks to keep permission. The letter does not record that Flint acted or that a new law passed.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for lessons and guided practice

Graffort Club

Original: one-page letter and club resolution, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, February 4, 1910, addressed to Hon. Jacob H. Gallinger, Senate Chamber. Signed by Anne F. Howard, secretary. National Archives item 7268048.

Paraphrase of the final resolution: The club petitions the President and Secretary of the Interior to revoke the existing revocable permit. It also urges senators and representatives, especially members of the Public Lands Committees, to defeat any bill confirming the proposed use. It asks for copies to be sent to the Interior Secretary and its representatives in Congress. Earlier paragraphs argue that public park use would be restricted and that water could be obtained elsewhere.

Exact excerpt: “we petition the President and the Secretary of the Interior”. A letter to Gallinger contains requests to several officials and legislators. Its club resolution is not a congressional Act.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for lessons and guided practice

H.R. 7207 proposed bill

Original: first-page bill image held by the National Archives. Heading: House of Representatives, 63rd Congress, first session. It records introduction by Mr. Raker on August 1, 1913, and commitment and printing on August 5, 1913. Its heading is “A BILL”.

Paraphrase: The title proposes granting San Francisco certain rights of way in public lands, Yosemite National Park and Stanislaus National Forest, and certain lands there. The first lines use formal enacting language. This image is only page 1 of the proposal; it does not show the bill’s full terms, later votes or enactment.

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Act approved December 19, 1913

Original: U.S. Statutes at Large, volume 38, chapter 4, pages 242–251, Public No. 41, H.R. 7207. The government PDF begins at page 242 and continues into other Acts after this Act ends. Use only the labeled sections for this inquiry.

Paraphrase of section 1, page 242: Congress grants San Francisco specified rights of way for water works and other stated purposes, together with lands for reservoirs and dams as determined necessary by the Secretary of the Interior. These are legal grants with stated terms, not evidence that the works were built that day.

Paraphrase of section 2, page 243: Within three years of passage, the grantee must file maps showing the boundaries, locations and extent of the proposed rights of way and lands. No permanent construction may begin on that land until the maps have been filed and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

Exact excerpt from section 2: “no permanent construction work shall be commenced”. The sentence continues with the map-filing and approval condition. The Act ends with approval on December 19, 1913, on page 251.

A bill and an Act may both say “Be it enacted”. Use document heading, dates and the official approved Act, not that phrase alone, to decide document status.